



Back to Work at the State Capitol

Iowa's 150 elected legislators are back at it in Des Moines. The back to back snow storms and below zero temps from the polar vortex didn't slow down your lawmakers, who introduced 588 bills in the first three weeks of the 2019 legislative session. Legislators have until February 15 to sponsor bills, so look for that number to continue to grow for several more weeks.

For the third straight year, Republicans control the Governor's Office and both legislative chambers, with a 32-18 lead in the Senate and 53-46 majority in the House. Thirty-one legislators are new this year (22 in the House, 9 in the Senate). One out of every three legislators this year are women, a new record. More than half of the House Democrats are women – a first for our state.

Iowa's First Woman Governor Outlines 2019 Priorities

In addition to the record number of women in the Legislature, Iowa voters elected a woman Governor for the first time in history. Governor Reynolds was sworn in as Iowa's 43rd and first elected female governor on Friday, January 18th. Governor Reynolds rolled out her budget and policy priorities during her Condition of the State speech on the second day of session.

(continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3** Bergan Survives Special Contest Committee
- 3** 2019-2020 Guide to the Iowa Legislature
- 3** Register Now for Advocating for Change Day 2019
- 3** Important Dates Ahead
- 4** Home Modification Coalition Proposes New Grant Program
- 4** Public Forums
- 5** Issues Ahead in 2019
- 5** Bills of Interest (So Far...)
- 8** Join Us for New Monthly Advocacy Call-Ins

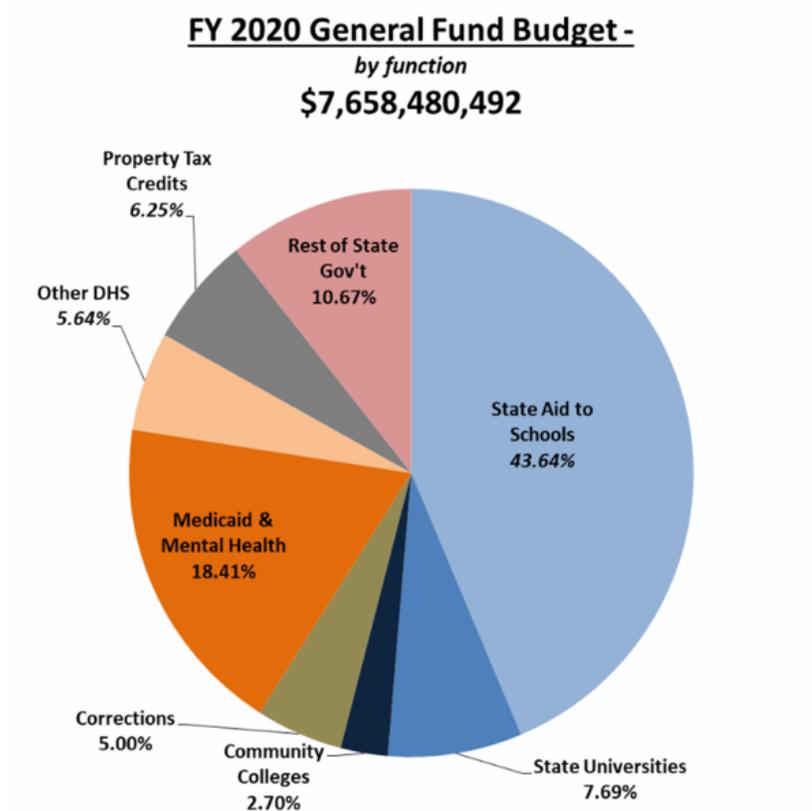
Governor's 2019 Priorities *(continued from page 1)*

The Governor recommended spending 97.4% of the money available. She is required by law to only spend 99%, so the Governor's recommendations leave a significant amount of money unspent. Among her requested increases:

- \$93 million for K-12 education (2.3% allowed growth).
- \$6 million for Medicaid coverage of new complex needs services.
- \$3 million to train teachers to recognize early signs of mental illness.
- \$1.2 million to reduce the Children's Mental Health Waiver waiting list.
- \$150,000 to expand mental health training of physician assistants and nurse practitioners.
- \$400,000 to add four additional psychiatry residencies in the state (16 total).
- \$10 million to bring high speed Internet access to all areas of Iowa
- \$8.5 million to increase Medicaid payments to nursing homes.
- \$144.5 million additional funds for Medicaid in the current fiscal year (much of that is to pay for the MCO contract raises).

While the Governor's budget does not include any recommendations for stabilizing funding for the mental health and disability services (MH/DS) regions, she does recommend giving regions more time to spend down their balances.

Below is a chart shows how the money is spent in the Governor's budget:



The Governor also recommended several policy initiatives, including her support for a proposed amendment to Iowa's Constitution that would restore the voting rights for individuals with felony convictions immediately after they are released. Felonies come in many forms, and in Iowa, damaging property worth \$1,000 or more can mean a felony conviction and a lifetime loss of voting. Iowa is one of two states that permanently restricts voting for persons that commit felonies (Kentucky being the other).

Constitutional amendments take at least four years. The change must pass once in 2019 or 2020 session, then it must pass in identical form again in the 2021 or 2022 session. If that happens, then it goes to the vote of the people in 2022. If the amendment passes, the constitution will be changed.

Bergan Survives Special Contest Committee

A special contest committee was appointed in the House to review one race, in which Republican Representative Mike Bergan beat Democrat Kayla Koether by only 9 votes. Twenty-nine ballots were not counted because they did not have postmarks that are recognized by Iowa law.

The contest committee decided that the ballots should not be counted, putting an end to the dispute in that race. The issue was the type of bar code; the bar code on the ballots was for a subscription service offered by the post office and the county did not pay for that service. There is a chance that the issue will end up back in court, but Representative Bergan will represent Decorah and parts of Winneshiek, Fayette, and Clayton Counties this year in the Iowa Legislature.

COMING SOON!

2019-2020 Guide to the Iowa Legislature

The 2019-2020 Guide to the Iowa Legislature is one resource you do not want to miss! Our Guide gives you all the information you need about the Iowa Legislature – how a bill becomes a law, significant dates, key committee members, contact information, and more.

All mail and email infoNET readers will get a copy of this Guide in the mail soon. If you do not receive a copy in the next two weeks, let us know at infonetiowa@gmail.com.

Register Now for Advocating for Change Day 2019

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and Iowans with Disabilities in Action invite you to join us for Advocating for Change Day. Advocating for Change Day is a day specifically for Iowans affected by disability to become skilled at communicating with their legislators and other elected state officials. As a participant you will have the opportunity to attend a legislative briefing, visit with available legislators and other elected officials and lobbyists, and watch the legislative process from the galleries (when the Senate and/or House are in session).

Cookies and drinks will be provided at the Capitol. Lunch will not be provided. Attendance is limited to the first 150 people who register.

Those who attend the legislative briefing will hear about the exciting opportunities Iowans with Disabilities in Action will soon be offering to help you better connect with your legislators. So don't miss out and get registered soon at www.idaction.org.

Important Dates Ahead

- Legislators have until Friday, February 15 to sponsor bills.
- First deadline is Friday, March 5 (when bills need to be voted out of their originating committee; this doesn't apply to tax and spending bills)

Issue Focus

Home Modification Coalition Proposes New Grant Program

By Dan Enderson, Senior Manager of Advocacy, National Multiple Sclerosis Society



Almost all of us, at some point in our lives, will experience a disability, whether as a result of a chronic disease, illness, developmental disability, accident, or age. When living with a disability, the condition and functionality of a home can mean the difference between continuing to live in one's home or leaving it for nursing or long-term care.

Without the proper equipment and modifications, a home can become a dangerous place for someone with limited mobility. Falling in one's home is one of the leading causes of visits to an emergency room or hospitalization for these lowans. Falls are physically and emotionally traumatic and can result in death. Iowa has one of the highest fall-related death rates in the country.

In order to remain safely in a home, modifications such as ramps, lifts, grab bars, or hallway and room remodels are sometimes a necessity. However, home modifications can be expensive. Homeowners wanting to remodel a home to accommodate a disability could spend thousands of dollars on average and upwards of more than \$25,000 for major modifications.

To help Iowa seniors and those living with disabilities live safely in their home, a coalition of aging, disability, and housing advocates this session are supporting the creation of the Accessible Homes for lowans program. This program would provide grants up to \$5,000 to low-income lowans living with a disability or over the age of 65 to make accessible modifications to a home. This session the coalition will be requesting an appropriation of \$1 million to the Iowa Department of Aging to create and administer this program.

Continuing to live in one's home promotes emotional wellbeing, independence, and maintaining a connection to the community and employment. It is also a more cost-effective housing option compared to institutional care. Using an average of the current cost of long-term care in Iowa, by keeping around 20 lowans in their homes and out of assisted living or nursing homes for a year would avoid \$1 million in expenses.

Please join our effort this year by reaching out to your legislators and urge them to support an appropriation for this program. If you would like more information, please contact Dan Enderson, Senior Manager of Advocacy with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society at dan.enderson@nmss.org.

Public Forums

Do not miss out on the best way to advocate - in person, in your own area. Iowa's elected officials are really good about getting back to their districts and talking to the people they represent. That goes for our members of Congress as well as your state legislators, and Governor Kim Reynolds, who is continuing the tradition of getting to all of Iowa's 99 counties each year.

To find a forum near you & get tips on attending a forum: www.infonetiowa.org/calendar/events/

Issues Ahead in 2019

The 2019 Legislature will have no shortage of issues to address this year. Among those that might be of interest to lowans with disabilities:

- Stable funding for MH/DS regions.
- Funding for new complex needs – both Medicaid and MH/DS regions.
- Roll-out (and funding) of new Children’s Mental Health System.
- More managed care oversight.
- Pulling long-term supports and services out of managed care.
- Increased reimbursement for substance use providers.
- Reallocation of the tiered rates for community-based providers.
- Expansion of cannabidiol (CBD oil) use to additional health conditions.
- Creation of a new program to help offset the costs of home modifications.
- 1-cent sales tax increase to pay for water quality, mental health, children’s mental health and other state priorities.

Are your legislators missing something that is important to you? If you care about something on this list or want to make sure another issue makes your legislator’s list this year, use our Grassroots Action Center to let them know. Get started at www.infonetowa.org/take-action/.

Bills of Interest (So Far...)

Bills in the House

HF 10 - Pre-Vocational Services: Directs DHS to review rates for prevocational services under the Medicaid home and community-based services waivers to find out the actual average cost of such services. Report due 10/1/19. (Status: House Human Resources Committee)

HF 120 - Telecoil Assistive Devices: Requires telecoil assistive device sellers to provide written information about the product, including the device’s compatibility with other ADA-compliant assistive devices. Applies to orders after 9/1/19. (Status: House Commerce Committee)

(continued on page 6)

Bills of Interest *(continued from page 5)*

HF 135 & SF 143 - Medicaid LTSS: Takes long-term services and supports (LTSS) out of the Medicaid managed care system, and puts it back into the state-managed fee-for-service system. Effective upon enactment. (Status: House & Senate Human Resources Committees)

HSB 70 & SSB 1073 – Financial Exploitation & Assault Against Older/Dependent Adults: Establishes new crimes against older individuals and dependent adults, including assault, theft, abuse, and financial exploitation. (Status: House Judiciary Committee)

HSB 73 & SSB 1056 - Mental Health Institute Patient Transfers: Requires the state MHIs to get approval from the Department of Corrections before transferring a patient to the Iowa Medical and Classification Center. Currently, the administrator may apply directly to the court in writing for a transfer order. (Status: House Human Resources Committee)

HSB 75 - Community Spouse Allowance: Increases the amount of money that can be retained for the spouse of an institutionalized individual to \$24,000 or minimum required under federal law, whichever is greater. (Status: House Human Resources Committee)

HSB 76 - Medicaid Appeals Reporting: Requires annual reporting of Medicaid member appeals. Currently, DHS is required to report biannually. (Status: House Human Resources Committee)

Bills in the Senate

SF 9 - MS Support Fund: Creates a lottery game to benefit individuals with multiple sclerosis (MS), with money received from the games going to the MS Support Fund. (Status: Senate State Government Committee)

SF 28 - Department of Education Repeal: Eliminates the Department of Education; special education responsibilities are transferred to AEAs. Establishes education savings grants for non-public school students. (Status: Senate Education Committee)

SF 35 - Counting Absentee Ballots: Requires county election commissioners to count all mailed absentee ballots received by Noon on the Monday following Election Day if they include a barcode or other means of tracking that confirms the ballot was mailed on time. (Status: Senate State Government Committee)

SF 37 - Regenerative Medicine Research Tax Credit: Lets taxpayers deduct 60% of any contribution made to an Iowa regenerative medicine research Retroactive to 1/1/19. (Status: Senate Ways & Means Committee)

SF 41 - Income Tax Exemption: Under this bill, a person would not pay taxes on income they earn providing services to individuals with physical or mental disabilities (as long as they work for a non-profit organization). Effective 1/1/20. (Status: Senate Ways & Means Committee)

SF 60 - Newborn Metabolic Screening: Requires screening of newborns for all recommended metabolic disorders (including lysosomal storage disorders) by 1/1/20. (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 64 - Green Alert Program: Creates green alert program for missing veterans-at-risk if there is reason to believe the veteran may be missing as a consequence of a physical or mental health condition that is related to the veteran-at-risk's military service. (Status: Senate Veterans Affairs Committee)

SF 71 - Medical Cannabidiol for Students: Allows public and private schools to allow caregivers to administer medical cannabidiol to students on school grounds. (Status: Senate Judiciary Committee)

(continued on page 7)

Bills of Interest *(continued from page 6)*

SF 77 - Medical Cannabidiol Regulation: Expands access to medical cannabidiol for individuals with multiple sclerosis and any medical condition a health care provider thinks could benefit from use. Increases the allowable tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) level from 3% to 13%. (Status: Senate Judiciary Committee)

SF 78 - Medical Cannabidiol Definition: Eliminates the 3% THC level cap and instead allows a 90-day supply of medical cannabidiol to contain up to 90 grams of THC. (Status: Senate Judiciary Committee)

SF 104 - Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Act: Creates the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Act, allowing a patient with any debilitating condition to use medical cannabis with written certification from a health care practitioner. Allows all types of cannabis, not just the oil. (Status: Senate Judiciary Committee)

SF 144 - Geriatric Housing: Directs the state to issue an RFP for a privately-run housing facility for aging sex offenders and those who sexually aggressive. Progress report due 10/1/19 (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 147 - Medicaid Therapy Services: Requires DHS allow multiple procedure payments for therapy services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and services for individuals with speech, hearing, and language disorders, if they are provided to children up to age 21. (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 148 - Medicaid Prior Authorization Process: Requires all Medicaid MCOs use a uniform process for prior authorization requests. (Status: Senate Human Resources Committee)

SF 151 - Home Improvement Fraud: Makes home improvement fraud a class “D” felony. (Status: Senate Judiciary Committee)

SF 153 & HSB 21 - Dependent Adult Abuse: Changes requirements for what is considered exploitation of a dependent adult, eliminating the need to prove that a caretaker took unfair advantage of the person for his/her own profit. (Status: Senate & House Judiciary Committees)

SF 167 - Health Care Loan Repayment Program: Makes mental health professionals eligible for student loan repayment under the health care loan repayment program currently available to nurses, physician assistants, and nurse educators. (Status: Senate Education Committee)

SSB 1018 & HSB 22 - Adult and Minor Guardianship: Makes changes to guardianship and conservatorship laws for both adults and minors, including appointments, roles of attorney and guardian ad litem, court-ordered professional evaluations, mandated criminal background checks, emergency appointments, and process for removal. (Status: Senate & House Judiciary Committees)

SSB 1036 - Consumer Advocate Office: Prohibits employees of the Office of Consumer Advocate from engaging in political activities. Replaces the consumer advisory panel with the consumer advocate governing board consisting of three members appointed by the Attorney General and six members appointed by the Governor. (Status: Senate Commerce Committee)

When prompted, enter 515 242 6150 #: You will be placed on hold until the leader signs in.

Call 1-866-685-1580

To join by phone:

Friday, March 15 @ 10-10:30 am

Friday, February 15 @ 10-10:30 am

infoNET/DD Council Advocacy Calls

can do to make your voice heard.

The legislative session is fast-moving and it can be tough to stay on top of the issues being discussed at our State Capitol. That's why the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council will be hosting monthly advocacy calls. Join lobbyist and infoNET writer Amy Campbell and DD Council Public Policy Manager Rik Shannon to talk about the issues being discussed at the Capitol and what you

Join Us for New Monthly Advocacy Call-Ins

c/o Iowans with Disabilities in Action

PO Box 737

Des Moines, IA 50303

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Des Moines, IA



IOWA'S DISABILITY POLICY RESOURCE